II

THE KENTUCKY BOY

THOMAS BOYD

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THE letters S O S, so grouped, have a multitude of meanings. Coming from a ship at sea they are a signal of distress and a plea for help; used in common speech they apply to subjects which have become distasteful through repetition. But to John Goodwin those letters described the hellish invention of some especially adept fiend.

Draw a wavering line from Verdun through Château-Thierry, and in the area south of that line, from Toul to Marseilles, you will have Goodwin's S O S. It was a maze of training camps where men were taught to load a rifle; warehouses of food, clothing, and ammunition, general and sectional headquarters, military police, and hospitals—the service of supplies. And all of it filled Goodwin with a sharp disgust.

He would have said, as he lay in one of a row of white iron beds and glared at the swarthy hospital apprentice who was trying to bluster a wounded man into taking hold of a broom, that he had always hated the S O S, hated it instinc-

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tively from the moment he had heard of it. But this would not have been true. There had been a time, from March to June, when the service of supplies seemed a desirable place to be. Unexplored, it was greatly preferable to standing in a muddy trench four hours out of every eight, sleeping in a watery dugout, and eating corned beef and canned tomatoes. It had made Goodwin anxious for a minor wound which would take him to a bed with sheets and dry blankets, where his food would be cooked and served on a plate, and toward the middle of June, as he crouched in a shell hole, to the left of Vaux, his desire was fulfilled by the German artillery. One moment he heard a softly whirring noise, an explosion, and then through a cloud of thick, pungent gas he had rolled from his shelter, choking and gasping.

There was this to be admitted in favor of the S O S: at the evacuation hospital Goodwin had been given a bath and a clean suit of pajamas. And on the hospital train the Red Cross had given him a bar of chocolate. Other than that, nothing was to its credit. He had been made to stand in line for his food, his unlaced shoes

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sinking in the mud, a blanket thrown over his shoulders. He was told to make his own bed. The hospital attendants were bullies and thieves, the nurses were inattentive to the privates, and the doctors could have been less slip-shod in their treatment of the patients.

"All right, soldier. Snap out of it. Almost time for inspection."

Goodwin looked up, prepared to scowl, to curse, if necessary. But it was Hawthorne, so he asked with interest: "Got a cigarette?"

"Sure, I got a cartoon, but what good does that do? Yuh can't smoke in here." Hawthorne thrust his big brown hand in his jacket pocket and exhibited a package of cigarettes.

"Lord," Goodwin sighed. "But I wish I had my clothes."

"Git 'em," said Hawthorne with succinctness. "Git 'em."

Goodwin sat up, interested. " 'y gosh, I believe I will."

"Go ahead," encouraged Hawthorne. "An' we'll beat it outa here."

"Gosh——"

"Attention!" The hospital apprentice in

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charge of the ward shouted warning of the inspector's approach. A row of heads on either side of the room looked sharply toward the door; the patients in uniform stood stiffly by the foot of their beds, nervously smoothing out the wrinkles in the counterpane, and the medical officer, with a nurse and a sergeant following his bulbous hips, marched sternly into the room.

Goodwin, lying with his feet together and his hands flat at his sides, wondered whether Hawthorne would go, or whether he had only spoken lightly. A trip alone through the network of the S O S, with its military police and its railroad-transportation officers, would be disagreeable, but with Hawthorne to accompany him he could have "a hell of a lot of fun." And Hawthorne, even from the little he knew of him, was not the sort of person to say what he didn't mean. The inspecting doctor was approaching and he had to decide quickly.

"Sir, can I get my clothes?" He tried to work his features into an expression of health, eagerness, of a burning desire to fight in a holy cause.

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The hips wedged in between the two beds, wedged out again, and from the wide aisle the sergeant wrote out a requisition and handed it to Goodwin, leaving him to wait, restlessly, until the undignified formality was finished for the day.

"Carry on," called the hospital apprentice as the inspecting officer left the ward. The bodies relaxed, turning to one another to rid themselves of pent-up speech. Hawthorne approached, pushing his unloved overseas cap to one side of his head.

"D'ja git it?"

Goodwin showed him the slip of paper.

"Come on, then. We'll see what we kin talk outa the quartermaster. You wanta take everything you can lay your hands on."

"Do you mean it, sure enough to go back to the outfit?"

"Mean it? Hell, yes, soldier. Jist watch me." And with this assurance they walked out of the ward to the commissary, indistinguishable from the other buildings in its sallow complexion, its tarred roof, its eight little windows cut in the side, and the setting of drab mud where neither

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trees nor grass could be seen. Only officers, nurses, and important-looking non-coms of the medical corps strolled in twos and threes, planning dances at the hideous Y. M. C. A. or reminiscing over reckless supper-parties in the near-by town.

Inside the quartermaster building a bespectacled youth and a red-faced corporal stood behind a rough plank counter on which were articles of clothing. Goodwin handed the paper to the corporal, who passed it to the youth with spectacles.

"Size blouse ya wear?" asked the corporal.

Goodwin knew; he wasn't to be tricked into accepting ill-fitting garments. "Blouse, thirty-eight; underclothes, thirty-six; hat, seven and a quarter——"

"Matter a damn about that, buddy. I asked ya what size blouse you wore."

"I wouldn't let him call *me* buddy," Hawthorne seriously advised Goodwin. "I'd tell 'im the story of the apple and the——"

"Hey, let them pants alone," admonished the youth to Hawthorne, who was examining the stack of breeches on the counter. But Haw-

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thorne imperturbably continued: "Git a good pair while you're at it, soldier. Here—" He drew a pair of whip-cord breeches from the pile and handed them to Goodwin. "Regular officer's britches, and they're jist your size. Now we'll pick out a blouse."

Half an hour later the pair walked out of the building, enjoying the luxury of cigarettes. "How do I look?" asked Goodwin.

"Well, the hat's ridin' a little high an' the britches look like they was full of bricks, but the coat an' leggin's fit you fine." Hawthorne regarded him closely. "Pull up the britches and tear the band outa your hat an' you'll look like a Jigadier Brindle."

Goodwin unbuttoned his new blouse and pulled at his breeches until there was an unbroken line between the end of his spiral puttees and his hips. "Guess I'll throw away that rain-coat," he said, tearing out his hatband.

Hawthorne took the rain-coat from him, drawing off in an attitude of surprise. "Soldier, you hurt me when you talk thataway. Why, that there raincoat's good for forty francs any place in this country."

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"You mean sell it?" asked Goodwin.

"Sell it? Not if we seen some pore ol' woman with ten orphans standin' out in the rain without anything to eat an' no place to go. No, we'd give it away then. But if we don't see this ol' woman, the forty francs is ourn."

Goodwin chuckled. "An' this extra pair of shoes ought to bring fifty."

Before the thought of their departure, its risks, the danger of arrest, the highkeying sensation of travelling alone through foreign countries, outwitting M. P.'s and officers, and the prospect of arriving again among their own, everything else dissolved in a mist. On other days the meals were grumbled over, but to-day the dinner's bad qualities, the lumps of tomato, the uncooked pieces of beef, were unnoticed. And in high excitement, they dipped their messkits in the lukewarm water, dried them on a borrowed towel, and marched busily to the extreme end of the camp, vaulted a wall, and were on the highroad, bursting with deviltry and joy.

This highroad would have conquered less robust spirits. For miles ahead of them and behind it ran a straight course. The mud was an inch

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thick, and very slushy; under their feet and out on the brown stubble of grass, large chunks of it had been thrown by the wheels of passing cars. In rear of them, Goodwin heard the chug of a heavy motor, and he looked in vain for a spot on which he might stand and be safe from the mud. The truck came on.

"Wait," said Hawthorne. "Let's ask 'em for a ride. Look and see if there's an officer in the front seat." There was none, nothing but red cords; and both men signalled wildly. The truck slowed down, and they climbed over the end gate and were hauled aboard.

"Hello, Artillery." Hawthorne's voice was neither high nor deep. It was rather a voice, medium to begin with, which had acquired terrible clarity through sounding over long fields and wide valleys. "How far ye goin'?"

"Le Mans," said the sergeant in charge.

"Where's that at, Artillery? On the way to Paris?"

"It's on the way, as you might say," answered Artillery. "You can take a train from there."

"That's the place we'll go; huh, Goodwin?"

They settled down in the end of the bump-

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ing, careening truck, smoking cigarettes until they could hold the shortened stubs no longer, and staring restively at the flat, damp ground on either side of the road. A few miles ahead, Le Mans was already to be seen, the buildings gray in the afternoon light. It had the appearance of great size, and Goodwin wondered if the entrances were patrolled by military police, who, no doubt, would arrest them when they were discovered to be without travelling orders. But they could do nothing but chance it now.

The truck rolled over the pavement of the city, past the steep-roofed houses, and stopped at the beginning of a row of small shops. "Far as we go," said Artillery.

"Much obliged," said Hawthorne. They climbed down from the truck and walked along the street. To the right and left and on the main thoroughfare Le Mans was filled with American soldiers who lounged in doorways, swaggered along the sidewalk, explored narrow streets, overflowed the bakeries and cafés, until it seemed unlikely that room could be found for two more.

"This is no place for us," said Goodwin. "Let's find the railroad-station."

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"Let's have a drink first."

"There'll be a café near the station," said Goodwin nervously. "I don't like this town myself."

They walked on, unnoticed in the throng, until they saw the railroad tracks, two pairs of them on a black, cindery bed which rose above the street.

A picket fence secured the station from trespassers, but it was low and easily surmounted, Goodwin noticed with gratification. Nevertheless, it would be better to wait for evening to get a train. There were bound to be officers about the station. And the inevitable M. P.!

"There's the café," announced Hawthorne. "Now where's the drink?"

"Let's guess," said Goodwin, striding after Hawthorne's long legs, which were rapidly shortening the distance to a dilapidated brick building with musty windows.

The front room of the café was deserted, but in the rear a group of soldiers sat about a rectangular table, their blouses unfastened, their hats pushed high on their foreheads, with small glasses before them. One man, whom baldness

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had visited early and whose remaining hair grew about the scalp like a horseshoe, was talking with a great deal of smugness:

"Yes, and why shouldn't we be the best division in France? In the first place, we're selected men, and, in the second place, we're from New York. There's no bums among us. We didn't have to come into the army to make a livin'; we made ours in business."

Hawthorne sat listening, his drink untouched before him. He seemed very grave, as if he were intent on understanding all that was being spoken. Finally he asked, curious: "How long you been over here?"

The bald man stopped talking, smiled knowingly about the table, and answered: "Oh, about as long as you have, I guess."

"Have you ever been up to the front?" asked Hawthorne calmly.

"If we had you'd a seen our names in the paper, brother," said the bald man.

"What outfit did you say you was from?"

"New York's Own—selected division," said the man proudly. "What division are you from?"

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"The First Division of Regulars," said Hawthorne.

"Oh," said the bald man superiorly. "You with them yellowbellies?"

Hawthorne got slowly to his feet, reached for the iron coffee-stand, and threw it deliberately at the bald spot. The iron weapon struck the wall, jangling harshly to the floor a moment after the bald head disappeared under the table. "Why, damn you," said Hawthorne. He started to climb over the table, but Goodwin encircled his waist and coaxed: "Come on, Hawthorne. Let the poor fool alone. Can't you see he don't know any better? He don't mean anything; he jist ain't got any sense." Goodwin breathed hard through his exertion, but his arms remained straining about Hawthorne's narrow waist.

The bald head appeared at the corner of the table nearest the door, then ran. Hawthorne lunged to free himself, to reach the door, but Goodwin held on fast as the bald head bobbed out of sight.

"Gosh," said Goodwin, "I never seen anybody git under cover as fast as that in all my life."

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"Damn lucky he did or I'd a brained him."

"Damned lucky he did or you'd be in jail long after the war is over." The consequences of such an act struck a cold chill down Goodwin's spine. "Gosh!" he shivered. "That iron thing would a killed him sure." In that event he too would have had to go to jail!

Madame came in to light the lamps, frowning over her task, every one of her movements showing disapproval of what had happened. She, too, would have been affected if the coffee-stand had struck the bald man. She would have been arrested by the American officers for selling cognac and her café would have been closed.

Goodwin pushed his glass away. "Let's git outa here."

In the street the evening made outlines of houses and shadows of doorways. A bell from the railway-station, somewhere over the raised ground and beyond the picket fence, struck up a warning of an approaching train. "Let's hop it," said Goodwin. He led the way up the grassy embankment, and grasping hold of the top bar climbed over the fence. There were red and green signal-lights, and men with lanterns mov-

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ing about on the platform of the dimly lighted station. Then the train rushed in, throwing up a maze of ruddy sparks out of the mouth of the squat chimney. Goodwin, between the two tracks, followed the waiting line of coaches to the first-class compartments. "Hurry up," he called, unfastening the door. We'll ride in style." It swung open and they hurried inside as the shrill little whistle made infuriated noises. The wheels turned and the train rolled out of the station.

Through a thick, concave glass inset in the roof of the compartment, the electric lights gleamed coolly on the gray covering of the seats, each with its triangular bit of lace for a head-rest and separated from its neighbor by a padded arm. There were six seats in the compartment, three on each side, but Hawthorne and Goodwin were the only passengers. They sat facing each other by the window. Goodwin smoked, but Hawthorne gazed out at the hurtling scene like a shy but eager child. Colored lights on the railroad track, pin-points of gold through the darkness, clusters, fields of blinking lights in the distance, pale faces of girls out-

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side the compartment as the train stopped for a moment, then went on. It was all very fascinating and mysterious. He grinned.

"Gosh!" Goodwin unexpectedly remarked. "Gosh, but I got a good outfit. A fine bunch. Wy, we wouldn't have a guy like that skunk in the café around us for more'n two minutes."

"So've I," said Hawthorne. "There's only one fellah in the whole lot that I can't git along with."

"Who's that?" asked Goodwin.

"Our damn mess sergeant."

"Oh," said Goodwin. "That's the way with all mess sergeants."

"No." Hawthorne slowly shook his head, as if he had fully considered Goodwin's explanation and found it lacking in truth. "No, soldier, I don't think so. Now you take our mess sergeant when we was up in the trenches last Febuary. We had it pearty tough up there, standin' watch four on and eight off, sleepin' in the mud and bein' et up by cooties, but do you think that damn mess sergeant'ld ever send us down warm chow? No, sir. It wasn't that he couldn't a. The kitchen was in a forty-foot dugout where they

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had plenty of wood and plenty of grease-balls to keep things hot. But whenever I sent up a coupla men from my relief to git the chow, they'd always bring it back cold. No damn sense in it at all. So one day I goes up there with the chow detail. He was settin' down eatin' a big pie. 'Lenz,' I says to him, 'Lenz, how come we never get any hot chow?' He looked at me and mumbled: 'I guess your chow's hot enough.' 'Lenz,' I says, 'you're a damn liar and you know it. An' I'll tell you somepm else: if our chow's not hot to-day I'm gonna raise hell.' Well, he stands up at that and begins to git excited. 'Don't you call me a liar or I'll put ya out of here.' That made me peeved. I never liked 'im anyways. 'Lenz, you come here,' I said; and when he didn't come I went after 'im an' we tangled. I pounded that guy until my knuckles looked like raw meat, an' then I set out to kick hell out of 'im. I'd a done it too if they hadn't a ganged up on me, but what kin ya do aginst four grease-balls and a damn lieutenant?" Hawthorne made a deprecatory gesture with his big, brown hands, his first movement since he had begun his story. In fact, he made no ex-

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pression of any sort, his voice remaining at the same droning pitch.

"Je's," said Goodwin. "Too bad you didn't wait till some dark night. I suppose they socked you in the hoosegow?"

"Sure they did. 'You'll fight the war from the bull-pen, Hawthorne,' says the lieutenant. 'Yes, sir,' I said, 'and it's a damn good thing for that Lenz too, because if I ever git at 'im agin you won't have no evidence left to try me with.' "

"Gosh," said Goodwin, "you oughtn't to have said that. I'll bet that one crack put three more months on your sentence. No, sir, I wouldn't a said that, Hawthorne."

Hawthorne grinned. "So they put me in the bull-pen, an' it was a hell of a sight better'n doin' four on an' eight off. It was at first, anyways, 'cause I didn't have any work to do. Then we moved back to a rest camp where the rest of the gang drilled an' dug trenches all day long. I was jist gittin' used to settin' around again when they sticks me in front of a guy with a bayonet, give me an axe an' puts me on the wood-pile, splittin' rails for the kitchen stove.

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An' there wasn't nothin' else to do but swing that axe all day. Then on the second day I was out there at work with that sentry behind me an' I saw Lenz comin' along. He didn't see me at first, an' I went right on choppin' until he got within about ten feet of me. He was walkin' along, lookin' at the ground, and all at once he looks up an' sees me. He laughed, so I jist let loose of that axe an' shied it at 'im."

"Je's," said Goodwin, horror-struck. "Did it hit 'im?"

"No, damn it. Only the handle. An' off he limped to report me to the O. D."

Goodwin shook his head. "That'd mean a general court in my outfit. We've had guys sent to Leavensworth for less than that."

"It's a general in ours, too," said Hawthorne coolly. "An' I'd a got it except that we got shoved up to the front again. The day before we left, the captain comes in the bull-pen an' says: 'Hawthorne, we're goin' up to the front to do a job that'll make that other time we was in the trenches look like a sewin'-bee. Now you can take your choice: you can stay back here in the guard-house or you can go up in the front

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line an' let me see what you're made of.' 'All right, sir,' I says, 'I'm rarin' to go, but you better keep me away from that damn Lenz or I'll take him for a Squarehead.' 'Lenz won't be up there, you needn't worry about that,' says the captain, an' the next day we broke camp." Hawthorne paused.

"I guess your outfit wasn't up with us at Cantigny, was it?"

"No," said Goodwin. "We was up around Château-Thierry."

"Well, anyway, we went into the trenches at Cantigny the next day, an' them Squareheads seemed to know the minute we got there. They throwed everything they had at us: sea-bags, Jack Johnsons, whizz-bangs, Lord only knows what. An' there we was, in that old muddy trench, listenin' to them shells bustin' all around. Pow! pow! powie! they went, an' when they stopped an' we stuck our heads up over the firin' bay there was a nice thick line a Dutchmen pokin' along up to our trench. Y'ever seen 'em come over? They don't look human, do they? Maybe it's them long gray coats or maybe it's them funny-lookin' helmets that come

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down over their heads like flower-pots, but they sure don't look human. Then it might be the long bayonets—" Hawthorne speculated carefully: "Well, I don't know, only I say they don't look human. 'N'en I got a crazy feeling that they was goin' to come right over an' step right down in our trench an' chase us out. 'Cause you couldn't kill nowheres near all of 'em even if we did smoke up the old barrels of our rifles till they was too hot to hold.

"But as I was gonna say, on they come, an' it looked like good night for us, when our own artillery opens up and lays down a barrage so thick it looked like rain. You could see the Squareheads sort of stop an' break up a little an' then come on agin, but our machine-guns caught 'em in an enfilade fire, an' the first thing we knowed somebody blowed a whistle in our trench an' everybody started yellin' 'Forward.'

" 'So it's up an' at 'em!' I says to Crawford in a kind of a joke, but he hadn't anything to say. Something had walloped him in the head. Well, it was tough work gittin' outa that trench. The mud was so soft an' the trench so deep an' the barb wire so tough I thought I never would

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git out. An' then we starts over that yellow ground, dodgin' into shell holes and gittin' up and runnin' like rabbits toward the Square-heads' trench. I got about half-way there an' that was all. They got me jist below the knee with a machine-gun bullet." Hawthorne stopped talking, bent over, and carefully unwrapped his cloth puttee. Between the calf and the knee was a bandage, already soiled around the edges, in the centre of which a crimson bit of rust was showing.

"Gosh," said Goodwin, "you better be takin' care of that dressing or you won't have any leg left." He paused, staring down at his hob-nailed boots in a bewildered manner. "You sure was lucky, Hawthorne. You got away with murder," he said slowly. Of course it was Hawthorne's own business if he wanted to carry on in that way, but Goodwin could not approve of it. There was something about Hawthorne's experience that flouted natural laws. It was almost an insult to the whole body of soldiery that he could pummel a non-com, be arrested, and, while under guard, deliberately throw an axe at the same non-com, and then not be pun-

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ished for anything. But Hawthorne had learned his lesson; no doubt about that. . . . Poor old Hawthorne. He sure would be in bad if he and Goodwin were taken up by one of the military police. Why, with his record, he would get life imprisonment. He never should have gone with him on this escapade. He wouldn't if he had known the trouble Hawthorne had been in. But now that he had gone, had abetted him, almost, it devolved upon him to keep Hawthorne from the clutches of the M. P.'s.

"Hawthorne," he said earnestly, "I don't think we oughta go to Paris. It's too damned dangerous. I guess it's a great city, all right, but we ought to see it from the picture-cards this time."

"Soldier, you don't wanna miss Gay Paree. It's a bon sec*tor*. That's where everybody goes."

"I know it is. The M. P.'s is there, too."

"How will we git back to our outfits if we don't go to Paris?"

"Well, I didn't mean not to go there, exactly, Hawthorne. Course we got to go there to change trains. But there'll be a lot of M. P.'s at the station we come in at, an' I thought we

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could jump off at a suburb an' take a street-car through town to the other station."

"I s'pose it's all right," said Hawthorne, "but I'd like to see some of the town."

"Well, we can see it from the street-car."

"Lord, soldier, I don't mean thataway," said Hawthorne gloomily. "Besides, they'll see us at the station we go out at, anyways."

"Yeh," considered Goodwin. "But they don't bother yuh if you're goin'; it's only when you're comin' in that they pick yuh up."

"I thought you wanted to see Paris, soldier?"

"I did." How strongly he wanted to see Paris, how long he had been fascinated by tales of the Café de la Paix and the Folies Bergère, the Apache district! For a moment he weakened, but a moment only, for at the end of this merriment he saw Hawthorne in Saint Anne's Prison, with a service record that was black as ink, and charged with being absent without leave. "I don't want to now, though."

"Cold feet?" asked Hawthorne.

Goodwin gulped: Cold feet! But the train was speeding to Paris, Saint Denis was the next stop, and the matter must be decided at once. "Yeh," admitted Goodwin.

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"All right," grinned Hawthorne, "I won't ditch ya, soldier. When do we git off?"

The train was slowing down, and before it had fully stopped they had jumped from the compartment to the cinder walk where an Ancient in a horizon-blue cape patrolled the premises with a swinging lantern.

Before them was a five-foot fence which terminated in a gate beside the brick wall of the station. The sign, Sortie, was above the gate, and before it stood the ticket-collector taking slips of pasteboard from the passengers.

"Don't let 'im stop us," cautioned Goodwin. Stepping quickly, with a sense of onslaught, they approached the gate, smiled at the collector, and—were halted. A ticket was demanded.

"Americain soldat," answered Hawthorne.

The explanation did not serve. Barring the exit, the collector repeated his demand.

"What?" asked Hawthorne, leaning over the Frenchman, as if he thought distance to be all that prevented him from understanding.

"Ticket, comme ça, comme ça!" The Frenchman, growing irritated, held out a ticket which

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he had taken from another passenger, to show what he wanted.

"No savvy. I don't git ya, mister." Hawthorne slowly shook his head.

The collector danced in his exasperation over these Americans. "Ticket, ticket," he shouted.

"I don't know what you mean!" Hawthorne's voice was yet louder. "Here, how's this?" He reached in his pocket, withdrew his hospital order for a wound chevron, and held it forth.

The Frenchman violently shook his head.

"Tell 'im we're goin' back to our outfit, Hawthorne. Mussear, Bosche! Bing, bing! Toot sweet! Allemande. Knock hell out of the whole bunch!" Goodwin gritted his teeth at imaginary Germans, lunged with an imaginary bayonet, pressed an imaginary trigger, and smiled ingratiatingly.

The Frenchman cursed, waved his hands, and despaired. They passed out into the street, gay in their achievement.

No street-cars were to be seen, but an English soldier whom Goodwin hailed piloted them to the Metro and gave them directions to the

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Gare de L'Est. And so, while the stage of the Folies Bergère was a tantalizing mist of gauze and flesh, while a field clerk paid for the dinner of a cocotte at the Moulin Rouge, while a respectable line-officer lay prone on a bench by the Sacre Cour, and while the military police sleuthed the streets, Goodwin and Hawthorne rumbled through the bowels of Paris—the city of their latter dreams—to take the train for Toul.

Goodwin saw the dawn from a third-class coach in which he sat half-smothered by a detachment of French soldiers. He wondered how it was possible for Hawthorne to sleep. His charge was sprawled on the floor of the coach, his head resting on the feet of a snoring poilu and his legs serving as a pillow for another. Not that Hawthorne's position was too uncomfortable for rest. Goodwin himself had lain that way innumerable times. His wonder was that Hawthorne could forget about his peril. He was, as Goodwin saw it, in a dangerous position. If the least thing happened to him to cause his arrest, his past record would certainly be the cause of his going to jail. At this instant, if they

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were seen by a military police, a railroad-transportation officer, in fact, any commissioned man, Hawthorne would be arrested, and when the court-martial board saw his record he might be tried for desertion. How could he explain that he was going back to the front? Goodwin worried, looking out the window at the green and brown rectangular fields, the gray farmhouses, the villages clustered on the quiet hilltops.

Soon they would arrive in Toul, and if they got off the train and through the city without being challenged, Hawthorne would be comparatively safe. But Toul was a divisional headquarters. Officers and soldiers would be at the station. It would be useless to attempt to pass the ticket-collector. But they could, by leaving the train by the left side instead of the right and walking across the tracks, avoid the collector completely. So Goodwin schemed for the welfare of his friend while the friend slept on, in a mass between the seats, ignorant of Goodwin's scheming.

Toul tells its mediæval story by the thick walls, the moat which surrounds it, the turrets, with long slits for the archers, rising above the

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walls and looking out over the calm, fertile country of wood and farm. Goodwin saw it from the window; shook Hawthorne by the shoulder. "Get up, Hawthorne, here we are," he called.

"Huh! Where?" Hawthorne disentangled himself and sat up, staring at Goodwin.

"We'll be at Toul in a minute an' we'll have to git off the minute the train stops."

Hawthorne grinned. "All right, soldier, I guess I kin say 'No savvy' to the Frogs."

"I gotta stunt, Hawthorne. When the train stops we'll get off on the wrong side an' beat it while the coaches are still standin' between us an' the station."

The train slackened, jerked, the bumpers of the coaches struck and recoiled. Goodwin raised the latch and opened the door.

With Goodwin leading, they trotted across the tracks, cleared the fence, and followed the street which led through the outer gate at the north. Suddenly Hawthorne halted.

"I don't know about you, soldier, but my laig hurts and I want some chow."

"Come on, Hawthorne," Goodwin coaxed.

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"We're nearly there now. We'll be at our outfits by noon. Maybe we can find a farmhouse along the way."

"Hell," said Hawthorne sceptically, "we won't see our outfits afore night, an' you know it. Besides, it's nearly all evacuated district between here an' the front."

"Come on, Hawthorne. The streets'll be full of soldiers in a minute an' we'll git run in," Goodwin pleaded.

Hawthorne resigned himself. "An' me with a gimpy laig," he said.

They walked under the heavy gateway to the road, a white ridge bending along green slopes past the walled town and through a wood where the ground levelled. There, the road was straight, with an appearance of coolness beneath the overhanging boughs. They walked without speaking. Hawthorne, because of the not-quite-healed wound in his leg, employed a kind of ploughing gait, and from time to time Goodwin would regard him stealthily, jealously, then look straight ahead again to the point where the road narrowed into nothingness. He was satisfied with himself, pleased with his success in

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bringing Hawthorne back to his outfit safely. If it hadn't been for him, Hawthorne would certainly have been arrested. And with his record! He would have been thrown in jail for the rest of his life. But now Hawthorne could go back to his outfit and live down his attack on the mess sergeant. At any rate, Hawthorne had learned his lesson.

In rear of them the revolutions of a motor sounded, and as they looked back they saw an ambulance speeding toward them. The brakes tightened, the rubber seared, skidding on the gravel, and an obliging driver stopped.

At the back of the car they sat facing each other on the long, leather-covered seats. Signs of the front grew more numerous each moment. The evacuation hospital, the camouflaged supply dump, the long-range guns hidden in a cellar and covered with leaves, the mended road, the concrete machine-gun emplacement—they passed all of them.

At a crossroad the ambulance stopped. To the left was a shell-raked farmhouse, headquarters of the brigade to which Hawthorne belonged. To the right, far beyond the blue-black woods,

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lay Goodwin's troops. Goodwin held out his hand.

"Well, Hawthorne, what'll you do when you git back to your outfit?"

"Hell," said Hawthorne, tightening his webbed belt and grinning, "I'll report for duty an' then carve my name all over the face of that Lenz."

"Who?" asked Goodwin.

"Lenz, the mess sergeant."

"Oh," said Goodwin dully, far down in his throat. . . . "Well, so long, Hawthorne."

As he turned to the right he was sickeningly aware of the distance he had yet to go and the fact that he was very hungry.

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